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DALLAS MORNING NEWS (TX)
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Covert Action:

The CIA Blues

IT hasn't been clear for quite a while: What's the Central Intelligence Agency supposed to be doing? Just gathering intelligence? Or is it also supposed to overthrow governments and carry out counterterrorist missions?

Congressional committees are trying to find out in the wake of a *Washington Post* report alleging that the CIA knew of, and worked with the Lebanese group responsible for, the March car bombing in Beirut that killed 80 people.

The bombing's target was Hussein Fadlallah, a Shiite thought to have been behind terrorist attacks on Americans, chief of these being the October 1983 bombing of the American embassy in Beirut, which killed 241 Americans. The CIA denies that it is in any way connected to the bombing.

And what of the agency's role in Nicaragua? The Democratic-controlled House Intelligence Committee now says the CIA *should* be permitted to share intelligence with the *contras* fighting the ruling Marxist junta, the Sandinistas, though not to give any other form of military aid.

But why do we have to use CIA "covert" action to help the *contras* (and other anti-communist rebels)? Why can't we do so openly and proudly, especially since "covert" action that everyone knows about is a joke?

In the last decade has come Congress' gutting of the CIA, the War Powers Act, the Foreign Assistance Act, the Clark Amendment (precluding covert aid to the Angolian freedom-fighters) and, in 1982, the Boland Amendment, setting conditions on aid to anti-communist rebels in Nicaragua.

These, in toto, cripple our capacity to counter what has become the most pervasive menace to peace and freedom: communist-backed guerrilla war and terrorism — not nuclear or conventional war.

Thus has this field been left to the Soviets and their agents, who have not hesitated to move in.

And the Islamic terrorism now threatening Mideast stability could have been blunted had the CIA properly aided the shah of Iran in dealing with the Khomeini-led zealots who seized power in Iran after his overthrow.

This menace to democracies will get worse until Congress faces up to the admittedly ungentlemanly things that must be done to counter it

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